

§ 124.514 Exercise of 8(a) options and modifications.

(a) *Unpriced options.* The exercise of an unpriced option is considered to be a new contracting action.

(1) If a concern has graduated or been terminated from the 8(a) BD program or is no longer small under the size standard corresponding to the SIC code for the requirement, negotiations to price the option cannot be entered into and the option cannot be exercised.

(2) If the concern is still a Participant and otherwise eligible for the requirement on a sole source basis, the procuring activity contracting officer may negotiate price and exercise the option provided the option, considered a new contracting action, meets all regulatory requirements, including the procuring activity's offering and SBA's acceptance of the requirement for the 8(a) BD program.

(3) If the estimated fair market price of the option exceeds the applicable threshold amount set forth in § 124.506, the requirement must be competed as a new contract among eligible Participants.

(b) *Priced options.* The procuring activity contracting officer may exercise a priced option to an 8(a) contract whether the concern that received the award has graduated or been terminated from the 8(a) BD program or is no longer eligible if to do so is in the best interests of the Government.

(c) *Modifications beyond the scope.* A modification beyond the scope of the initial 8(a) contract award is considered to be a new contracting action. It will be treated the same as an unpriced option as described in paragraph (a) of this section.

(d) *Modifications within the scope.* The procuring activity contracting officer may exercise a modification within the scope of the initial 8(a) contract whether the concern that received the award has graduated or been terminated from the 8(a) BD program or is no longer eligible if to do so is in the best interests of the Government.

§ 124.515 Can a Participant change its ownership or control and continue to perform an 8(a) contract, and can it transfer performance to another firm?

(a) An 8(a) contract must be performed by the Participant that initially received it unless a waiver is granted under paragraph (b) of this section.

(1) An 8(a) contract, whether in the base or an option year, must be terminated for the convenience of the Government if:

(i) One or more of the individuals upon whom eligibility for the 8(a) BD program was based relinquishes or enters into any agreement to relinquish ownership or control of the Participant such that the Participant would no longer be controlled or at least 51% owned by disadvantaged individuals; or

(ii) The contract is transferred or novated for any reason to another firm.

(2) The procuring activity may not assess repurchase costs or other damages against the Participant due solely to the provisions of this section.

(b) The SBA Administrator may waive the requirements of paragraph (a)(1) of this section if requested to do so by the 8(a) contractor when:

(1) It is necessary for the owners of the concern to surrender partial control of such concern on a temporary basis in order to obtain equity financing;

(2) Ownership and control of the concern that is performing the 8(a) contract will pass to another Participant, but only if the acquiring firm would otherwise be eligible to receive the award directly as an 8(a) contract;

(3) Any individual upon whom eligibility was based is no longer able to exercise control of the concern due to physical or mental incapacity or death;

(4) The head of the procuring agency, or an official with delegated authority from the agency head, certifies that termination of the contract would severely impair attainment of the agency's program objectives or missions; or

(5) It is necessary for the disadvantaged owners of the initial 8(a) awardee to relinquish ownership of a majority of the voting stock of the concern in order to raise equity capital, but only if—

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(i) The concern has graduated from the 8(a) BD program;

(ii) The disadvantaged owners will maintain ownership of the largest single outstanding block of voting stock (including stock held by affiliated parties); and

(iii) The disadvantaged owners will maintain control of the daily business operations of the concern.

(c) The 8(a) contractor must request a waiver in writing prior to the change of ownership and control except in the case of death or incapacity. A request for waiver due to incapacity or death must be submitted within 60 days after such occurrence. The Participant seeking to change ownership or control must specify the grounds upon which it requests a waiver, and must demonstrate that the proposed transaction would meet such grounds.

(d) SBA determines the eligibility of an acquiring Participant under paragraph (b)(2) of this section by referring to the items identified in § 124.507(b)(2) and deciding whether at the time of the request for waiver (and prior to the transaction) the acquiring Participant is a responsible and eligible concern with respect to each contract for which a waiver is sought. As part of the waiver request, the acquiring firm must certify that it is a small business for the size standard corresponding to the SIC code assigned to each contract for which a waiver is sought.

(e) Anyone other than a procuring agency head who submits a certification regarding the impairment of the agency's objectives under paragraph (b)(4) of this section, must also certify delegated authority to make the certification.

(f) In processing a request for a waiver under paragraph (b)(2) of this section, SBA will treat a transfer of all a Participant's operating assets to another Participant the same as the transfer of an ownership interest, provided the Participant that transfers its assets to another eligible Participant:

(1) Voluntarily graduates from the 8(a) BD program; and

(2) Ceases its business operations, or presents a plan to SBA for its orderly dissolution.

(g) A concern performing an 8(a) contract must notify SBA in writing im-

mediately upon entering into an agreement or agreement in principle (either oral or written) to transfer all or part of its stock or other ownership interest or assets to any other party. Such an agreement could include an oral agreement to enter into a transaction to transfer interests in the future.

(h) The Administrator has discretion to decline a request for waiver even though legal authority exists to grant the waiver.

(i) The 8(a) contractor may appeal SBA's denial of a waiver request by filing a petition with OHA pursuant to part 134 of this chapter within 45 days after the contractor receives the Administrator's decision.

[63 FR 35739, June 30, 1998, as amended at 67 FR 47246, July 18, 2002]

§ 124.516 Who decides contract disputes arising between a Participant and a procuring activity after the award of an 8(a) contract?

For purposes of the Disputes Clause of a specific 8(a) contract, the contracting officer is that of the procuring activity. A dispute arising between an 8(a) contractor and the procuring activity contracting officer will be decided by the procuring activity, and appeals may be taken by the 8(a) contractor without SBA involvement.

§ 124.517 Can the eligibility or size of a Participant for award of an 8(a) contract be questioned?

(a) The eligibility of a Participant for a sole source or competitive 8(a) requirement may not be challenged by another Participant or any other party, either to SBA or any administrative forum as part of a bid or other contract protest.

(b) The size status of the apparent successful offeror for a competitive 8(a) procurement may be protested pursuant to § 121.1001(a)(2) of this chapter. The size status of a nominated Participant for a sole source 8(a) procurement may not be protested by another Participant or any other party.

(c) A Participant cannot appeal SBA's determination not to award it a specific 8(a) contract because the concern lacks an element of responsibility or is ineligible for the contract, other than the right set forth in § 124.501(h) to